

**Statement by Luis Moreno  
Ambassador-Designate to Jamaica  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
02/06/2014**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Jamaica. I want to express my gratitude to President Obama and Secretary Kerry, as well as to Assistant Secretary Roberta Jacobson for their trust and confidence.

Please allow me the opportunity to introduce my wife Gloria who is here with me today. Without her patience, unconditional support and understanding, I would not be sitting here in front of you. My oldest daughter, Sabina is following on line from Florida and my youngest daughter, Denise, along with my friends and colleagues from the Embassy are also following on line from Spain. As I acknowledge the support of my family, I would be remiss not to mention my parents, both deceased, and who played a major role in my choice of career. My dad was a refugee, a medical doctor who fled the political violence in his native born Colombia and found refuge in New York City. Naturally, his medical degree was not recognized and he did not speak a word of English. What followed was a classic American success story. During his career he became the head of orthopedic surgery at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital and helped develop the

artificial hip replacement procedures. With my mom, a nursing student born in Cuba, he raised two boys born in the United States, both of whom ended up in the senior ranks of the Department of State, and in whom he ingrained a passion for service to their country. My brother, Ed recently retired after 25 years of service from Diplomatic Security where he last served as the Assistant Director of DS for Domestic Operations. I know our parents would be very proud of the service of both their sons if they were here today.

I have been privileged to serve my country for 31 years in postings in the Western Hemisphere, the Middle East, Europe, and in Washington, including three postings as Deputy Chief of Mission in Port-au-Prince, Tel Aviv and, most recently, Madrid. In fact in my 28 years of overseas postings, Madrid has been my only non-danger, non-hardship posting. I have covered a wide range of issues throughout my career: narcotics and law enforcement in Colombia, Peru, and Panama; refugee issues in Haiti and with Kurds from Northern Iraq that were resettled in the U.S. via Guam; political-military, and transitional issues in Iraq, as well as playing a small role in the Middle East peace process while in Israel. While my assignments have afforded me a diverse and multifaceted background, there is a clear commonality among most of my assignments – I work toward team building and finding solutions to challenges in tough places. If confirmed as Ambassador, it will be along those same lines that I will lead our Mission in

Jamaica. I will lead the Embassy team to find solutions to the toughest problems this close friend and neighbor is currently experiencing.

The United States and Jamaica enjoy a strong, cooperative relationship that crosses many spheres, including citizen security, law enforcement, strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, respect for human rights, energy, climate change, and economic development. Jamaica has a well-earned reputation as a tourist destination, hosting over two million American visitors every year. The safety and security of these visitors and the 40,000 Americans who currently live in Jamaica, will be my highest priority. Despite this reputation as a tropical paradise for tourists, Jamaica, a mere 51 years after independence, is facing severe challenges which could have a long-lasting impact if we don't act to help Jamaica mitigate them now. I would like to highlight two of the most daunting challenges: the economic reform Jamaica agreed to undertake last year ensuring the security of both our nations and our citizens. Jamaica, along with much of the Caribbean, is particularly vulnerable to not only these man-made risks but also to natural disasters such as devastating hurricanes or earthquakes.

Mr. Chairman, since 9/11 the United States has emphasized the need to strengthen our borders. The Caribbean is our third border. Ensuring stability abroad, both in terms of citizen security and economic development in countries like Jamaica, increases our own security at home. Our current assistance to

Jamaica, including through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) and USAID's bilateral assistance, seeks to partner with Jamaica to address shared regional challenges that affect the everyday concerns of Jamaica's citizens. If confirmed, I will work as Ambassador to most efficiently use the available resources to ensure Jamaica continues on the path of sustainable economic and social development. This is in the interest of both Jamaica and the United States.

Last May, Jamaica signed an economic reform package with the International Monetary Fund to help tackle its huge public debt – almost one and a half times its annual Gross Domestic Product, one of the highest ratios in the world. This package, together with loans from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, adds up to almost \$2 billion. Approximately three years of this agreement remain for Jamaica to get its financial house in order and begin to grow its economy – something it hasn't been able to do in nearly three decades. If confirmed, I will likely be there during most of that time. Let me reassure you that this issue will be among my highest priorities. I will work with our Jamaican partners to encourage them through the difficult economic times that will no doubt take place, while reminding them about the enduring and sustainable benefits of partnership with the U.S. and the prospects that will emerge as a result of reform and more economic stability. The ingredients for success are evident. For example, through a USAID activity supporting Jamaica's Tax Administration, the

Government of Jamaica has identified and recouped over \$100 million in unpaid taxes, thereby increasing its revenue base and creating a foundation for sound, transparent, and self-sustaining revenue forecasting and collections.

This is an historic opportunity for Jamaicans to build a stronger, more prosperous country. If confirmed, I pledge to serve our country just as I have been doing for the past three decades and to work with our Jamaican friends to continue to strengthen the partnership between our two countries.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.